

Susan Nyoka

Halfway through our interview, Susan stands up in the small café we're in, brings one knee up into her chest, holds her foot in her hand, and then extends out beautifully; her other hand, on her hip. She's telling me about a class where everyone stood in a line, and each person had to hold up the foot of the next person. She said it was scary being so close, because you knew that you could make someone (or everyone) fall. She holds the pose only for a quick moment, and then sits down again.

We've been talking about the give and take in life. Susan says some days, both on and off the mat, she feels rock solid, and she can hold up the person next to her, no problem. Other days, she needs all the help she can get. She sits back down, takes a sip of coffee, and then says, "It feels really empowering to be somewhere in that long line of people who are holding each other up."

Susan says she's always seen herself as a giver. She likes being filled up in order to give back. But in the busyness of a week, the days of summer working out in the field as a local botanist, the leftover light of the day that she tries to use to be creative, time just fills up. There's no moment of the day exactly concentrated on receiving, or filling back up. Yoga provides that for her. Susan says she's been to other studios, and has practiced yoga since 1990, but it's the teachers here who give her so much.

"When I come to yoga, I just..." She closes her eyes and sweeps her pretty arms outward, as she makes a sound like the ocean tide as she exhales, "...totally relax and unwind." She says a huge part of this is the genuine sense of care from the teachers. "The instructors here are always striving to become better instructors," she says. "This isn't their jobs. They have passion. They are striving to grow, and then share." Because of this, Susan can come here, ready to receive. We all can. Susan's right about the long line of people holding each other up. She's right about the balance of give and take. The beauty. The grace.